

Bits of Old Darwen IV Old Blacksnape. Narrated by William Fish with assistance from William Kershaw

Blacksnape has undergone change during the past century. Houses that had curious and mystifying names have gone, and many of the customs of the people of the past are no more than a tradition. There are few men living to-day who personally know the Blacksnape of other days, but one of them is William Fish, and he told me its story.

The Fish family, of Barron Fold, are of ancient Blacksnape stock. John Fish and William Fish, the sons of Fish Fish, were born in the house where William Fish, the latter's son, now 83 years of age, was also born and still lives. A part of the house, regarded as the "new part," was added to the old part in 1776, and the date-plate of the porch records its erection in 1792. What the story is of the older part of the premises William Fish does not know, and his father often said he would give 5s to know it. William is the patriarch of the district, and to his home the late Jeremy Hunt often came camping and talking about old families.

"Blacksnape has changed a lot since I was a lad," Mr Fish said, and he proceeded to mention a number of houses that have disappeared, and to name the sites. "Four houses stood out on the road, and a hawthorn hedge round them, but they have gone. We don't hear the click of the handloom as we did in the days when it was said it could be heard all the way from Blackburn to Bolton. There is no handloom weaving now in Blacksnape.

"My father was like the rest, a handloom weaver, and he also made handlooms. That was at the time old James Shorrocks, the father of Alderman Christopher Shorrocks, live at Prince's and gave out work to the handloom weavers all about. I remember James Shorrocks well. He was a fine, portly man, and one who was fond of a good joke and good company.

"John Cook was a well-known Blacksnape man nearly a hundred years ago, and lived in a house at the Pantry, opposite where the ruined buildings are now. There he had a sort of shop, where he sold fish and greens, and also he wove on the handloom. One of John's daughters became the wife of George Pickup, father of the late Alderman William Pickup, who married a daughter of Jeremy Thompson, of the Pantry. Councillor John Pickup, who has, like his father, been Mayor of Darwen, is one of her grandsons. John was a little, low-set man. He had a kind heart, and did many good actions.

"The gentleman of Blacksnape was old Jim Harwood, who lived at the Pantry. He was always well dressed, like a gentleman, in knee breeches, just as an old yeoman would be. He was an old handloom weaver at one time, and later he gave work out to the weavers.

"John Riley has a mixed career, for he was a bobbin winder, a weaver, a grocer, and a Publican. When he kept the Punch Bowl he would sing ;

'Once I was a bobbin winder,
And now I am a lord.'

"Amongst the oldest of Blacksnape families were the Kershaws. Old John Kershaw was one of the first Methodists in the district, and was living at the time John Wesley visited Darwen and preached. He was one of the instigators of the old Methodist School by Back-lane being built, and he is interred in its graveyard. His son became known as old William Kershaw, and lived opposite the Punch Bowl. In his way he was a bit of a character. His wife was a daughter of old David Knowles, and five sons were born to them – John, David (who was better known as "Punch"), William, Nicholas, and Thomas. John lived in Pole-lane, David was a collier and a handloom weaver. William was also a collier and worked for the Pickup's for over 70 years, Thomas was a weaver. David was one who was present at the last bull-baiting there ever was at Grimehills, and at the time of the plug-drawing riots he saw the Blacksnape folks running to see the rioters. When he got back he found his dinner had been stolen, and that was a serious loss, seeing that for the family they had only half a pound of mutton for a whole week.

"The bull-baiting was a cruel but a very popular sport, and it used to take place in a ring in Heys-lane. Dogs were turned out to tackle the bulls, and the dog that could grab the bull's nose and stick to it was the winner. No prizes were given, but a lot of betting took place around the ring, and this added to the excitement. Cock-fighting was a very general sport, and the birds were kept and trained to fight. There was one old character named Duerden, who came from Old Engine, and was a famous cock-fighter. On one occasion when his bird was blinded he made the remark that he wished he could give his own eyes to the cock. The sport was commonly indulged in on Sundays, and there was also jumping, racing, and fighting.

"John Riley had a brother called William, and he was the last of the handloom weavers. He was a wiry sort of chap, and lived in Sally-row. There was also James Riley, who married a daughter of Ann o' t' Nook's. One of his daughters married William Marsden, who was a rate-collector for many years.

"T' Nook is a part of Blacksnape which has disappeared.

"John Fish o' Baron's, my father, was the Blacksnape politician, and was known as Jack o' Billy's. He was one who got a newspaper, and therefore a name of importance. Richard Walkden and Edmund Shaw, of the Pantry, were his partners in defraying the cost of the newspaper, which was 7d a copy. The carriers had to bring the newspaper once a week when they bought wares, but sometimes they forgot, and someone had to be sent on foot all the way to Blackburn with 7d to get a copy. When it came to Blacksnape word went around. The folks would gather together, a farthing candle would be lit, and by its light the news of the week would be read out.

"William Chew was a character, and did a bit of prescribing for colds and common ailments. One of his sons came to live in Darwen, and was a clogger. Chew was at one time a coal proprietor in a small way. On one occasion there was a dispute with Holden, of Back o' th' Heigh, about an alleged encroachment. The colliers were told when they went to work one morning that if they were interfered with they must use their picks to defend themselves. This order was given by Holden's, but was not followed by the men. A lawsuit ensued, and the case was tried at Bolton.

"Thomas and Richard Walkden, known as Thomas and Rutchet o' Catherine's were handloom weavers, and lived in a house belonging to Chew. They lived to a long age, and never married. They have been dead a number of years.

"John Waddicor, of Drummer Stoops had three sons – Richard, Andrew and Robert. The Waddicors were weavers, and John had two brothers named Richard and William. Drummer Stoops is further along the road in the direction of Edgworth. That is the name of one side

After handloom weaving decayed they took other occupations. The people about there, and at Far Hillock and Near Hillock were all handloom weavers.

"The Yates's, of Far Hillock, were very old handloom weavers. They left Blacksnape, and I believe that the family is now principally scattered about the Edgworth and Bolton districts. One member became a publican at Hoddlesden. There were two daughters, one named Ruth, who married a Darwen man, and Mary, who married William Aspden, of Drummer Stoops. It was Jimmy o' th' Hillock who put in a claim to the ownership of Hoddlesden Moss, but the verdict was against him, and in favour of the Rankins.

"A man who lived at Drummer Stoops was Bill o' Roberts. His proper name was also William Aspden, and he was a farmer in a small way. Bill was the fighting man of the district, and in this respect was a very noted character. When Turton Fair was coming near he and Joan o' William's would go into training. On the Fair Day away they would go to Turton, and search for someone willing to fight them. If at four o'clock in the afternoon they had not come across a willing opponent, the first man met was struck a blow and compelled to fight, for they could not be expected to waste their day at the Fair and go home without having fought a battle. On one occasion there was a fighting match made between Joan o' William's and a man from Haslingden Grane, and the battle had to take place at Blacksnape. The man was late in arriving, and when he turned up he told Joan that he would not strike him, because the last man he hit he killed. Thereupon he got hold of Joan, and doubling him up like a pancake, put him down on the ground. That ended the battle. Bill was a strange man. He bought old horses and old cattle. One day he was riding past our house on an ass, and called my father out, and said, ' John, if you had taken care of your money when you were young you would have been able to ride on a pony now, like me.'

"At Blacksnape Fold old John Holden lived, and two of his sons, John and William, married my mother's sisters. John had a daughter Nancy, and she married Joshua Baron, who was a calico printer at Dob Meadows after James Greenway, in partnership with Sam Heron, Joshua Baron, and Robert Smith Edelstone. They printed the cloth at Dob Meadows, and bleached it where the Darwen Market-ground is now. The Holdens were a very old Darwen family, and Joshua Baron came from Marsh House. John Holden got coal from his land, and it lay not far below the surface. Much of his coal was sold in Blackburn. On one occasion John's coal-getters were not working. They usually took holiday each week on the Monday after pay day, but on this occasion they struck work, and went to Church Parish, with the intention of obtaining employment there. John told them that 'No one ever did any good who went away from home, so they had better stop at Blacksnape, and be content with things as they were.'

"The Dixons farmed at Whittlestonehead. I went to school with John and Ellen at Edgworth. John is now living at Wayo Farm. One of Dixon's daughters married James Pickup, and another Robert Pickup, who farms at Sleeper Hills. He had a son called Albert, who married Martha Knowles. Albert is dead, but Martha is living at Greenfield Farm.

"The proper name of Bill o' Ann's was William Fish, and he used to do a bit of teaching. He taught music and played a bass fiddle. Bill was a great musician, and fiddled at all the weddings and 'do's' there were round about. He also performed at Manchester and Chester. William came from Lower Darwen to Drummer Stoops after he had given up work. He was a very intelligent man, and was an old Calvinist. For a time he attended Lower Chapel, and then he left and started a new place of worship behind where Mr Entwistle had his druggist shop in Market-street. Besides being a good violinist, William was a leading singer, and had a splendid voice and a thorough knowledge of music. He was in great demand for twenty miles around. He was also something of a poet.

" John Entwistle, who was called John o' Bob's, lived at Grimehills, and was a handloom weaver. He had several children.

" Old John Nuttall was one of Blacksnape's characters, and a really good man. For a time he was a singer at St. Paul's Church, Hoddlesden. He went round the countryside selling religious tracts, which he carried in a wallet. The wallet was a sack, and in the centre was a hole through which he put his head. This was arranged so that the weight of that he carried was equally apportioned to each side of his body. One day he was accosted by a policeman, who somewhat roughly demanded to know what it was he was carrying. John was a teetotaler – that is, he never drank any liquor. There is a story that once he was asked to drink some rum, and refused to do so, but that he told those who offered it to pour the liquor on his porridge and he would eat it.

"Tom Sanderson lived in a house which since his time has been demolished, in the meadow. He had a family of either eleven or twelve, and attended Pole-lane and Lower Chapel.

"William Cooper, of Pinnacle Nook, was killed. He worked for James Shorrocks, and one day he was taking a quality of cloth woven by the handloom weavers up a narrow lane on the way to Manchester, and he was caught by the cart and killed.

"Aaron Bury lived at Near Scotland, and was a farmer. Like almost everybody else he was also a handloom weaver. They had to add handloom weaving to their other work in those days in order to live. One of Aaron's sons was Staveley Bury, who was organist at Trinity Church for a number of years.

"Oliver and Thomas Duxbury were brothers, and they farmed at Scotland Farm. One of their sisters was called Martha, and she never married. Thomas was a great friend of William Fish.

"Then there was old Kester Hindle, who farmed at Langshaw Head Farm. He always had the appearance of an old yeoman. He wore knee breeches, had a green vest, a swallow-tailed coat, and a ruffled shirt; and his beaver hat was both well-worn and well brushed.

"John o' t' Sunnyfields was a brother of Kester, and he was an ancestor of Mr F.G. Hindle, of Astley Bank, who represented the Darwen Division in the last Parliament. He was a farmer, and, like the rest, a handloom weaver. Mr Fritz Hindle, an ex-Mayor of Darwen, is one of his descendants.

"Then there was Timothy Holden, of Layrock Hall, who was grandfather of the late Alderman Timothy Lightbown, a former Mayor of Darwen. Timothy was one who paid a lot of attention to the fences on the common. He was only a little man.

"In several of the houses about Blacksnape whisky was made, and there was more than one hush-ship, which was a place where liquor was sold without a license.

"Dinnering day was always a great time in Blacksnape. Colours would be hung from the windows of the public-houses where the dinners were served, and everybody walked except two, the men in their best and the women in their white aprons and goffered caps. The two who did not walk were old George Cook and old Tom o' Alec's. George was the grand master, and he dressed in a sheep skin and rode horseback. Tom – his name was Walsh – brought up the rear, riding on a donkey's back. Those were great days – better than going to Blackpool, and better than Darwen Fair. Everybody turned out to walk, and everybody wore their best. Men in old times generally got a new suit when they married – not every summer, as they do now -- and it was brought out for all great occasions – usually about once a year, until they were buried. Then the suit would be passed on to the next generation as a valuable heirloom. The dinner consisted of beef and potato-pie and ale – something solid and substantial. That was the day of the year on which every one set out to have a great time – and there was no fighting. They were all too happy.

"Old Eccles, who lived at the top of Pole-lane, was a handloom weaver. He also moved into Darwen, and his family became cotton manufacturers. One of his sons was the late Mr Joseph Eccles, father of Alderman A. T. Eccles, who has during three years been

Mayor of Darwen. Another of old Eccles's sons was Thomas Eccles, who was also a cotton manufacturer, and made a lot of money running the blockade during the American war.

"John Fish lived at the Pantry, and had several daughters. He left Blacksnape, and went to Blackburn, where he became a cotton manufacturer. There was a blow-up, but it did not ruin him. He made money, and retired to Southport. One of his daughters met Phineas T. Barnum there, and married him. It was Barnum who offered Robert Entwistle £5 a week to stand at the door of his show, because he 'looked like an honest man!' Barnum died, and left his widow a lot of money, and whilst travelling in Egypt she met a French marquis, whom she married.

"An old soldier named Adam Shaw lived at Blacksnape, too. Adam fought in the Peninsular War, and was something of a character. He made a living by doing a bit of tailoring, a trade he had learned something about whilst in the army. One day he was joined by one of his old soldier chums, and they royally celebrated the reunion and fought their battles over again. It was the day of the anniversary of one of them, and as a commemoration they stormed the school at Blacksnape and smashed all the windows. Old Adam and his mate made their appearance before a magistrate, and he produced his medal and told their story, with the result that both were acquitted.

"The coal seams being only very shallow a jackroll was used to bring the coal to the surface. The banksmen were men of importance, their job being a lucrative one. There were two ropes to the jack, one travelling down and the other coming up with the coal. One day a mine-owner was standing by the banksman and said to him, pointing to the two ropes, 'Which of them is mine?' 'Well,' replied the banksman, 'Mine's coming up.'

"On another occasion a shaft was being sunk, and there was water trouble. They had no tub to wind the water out with, so a nine-gallon barrel of beer was sent for to the public house. The liquor was drunk, and after one end had been knocked out the barrel was used to bring the water out. After a time the publican inquired about the payment for his beer. 'Eh, we're not paying,' he was told, 'but thou can send us another nine gallon an' we'll be id straight.'

"Eighty years ago or so a man called Kay kept the Puch Bowl. He was father of old Tomas Kay, paper manufacturer, of Lower Darwen. On one occasion one of his horses strayed upon another man's land. A distraint had been issued against the other man, and when the bailiffs came they seized the horse and would have taken it away had not the inhabitants of Blacksnape turned out in a body. The bailiffs escaped with their lives, and that was about all they took away.

"David Kershaw, better known as 'Punch,' was a singular character, and very fond of tricks and practical joking. He traded in mowten weft, and would fill the inside of the cops he sold with water to make them weight heavier. He usually succeeded in that trick once. 'Punch' was also one who made whisky.

"The Marsdens were another Blacksnape family, and Isaac so loved the historic fighting men of England that he gave four of his sons their names. They were named Nelson, Collingwood, Blucher, and Wellington. Four members of this family were killed in a colliery disaster at Turncroft.

The Knowles family had considerable property in the hamlet, and it was on their estate there was the Jeremy Well which is to be found on the left side of the main road through Blacksnape. It practically supplied the whole of the hamlet with water.

"Another interesting Blacksnape family was that of the Taylors, and some of their descendants are now living in Darwen, one of them being a livery stable proprietor. Old John Taylor married Phoebe Holden, of Back o' th' Height.

"Nick names were very common; indeed people were better known by them than by their real names. The story is true that a workman from Darwen one day went to a house at Blacksnape and asked to be directed to the house of a man whose name had been given to him. The daughter of the house, who answered the door, did not know the name, but going to the foot of the staircase she called her mother, asking if she knew where the man lived. 'Aye,' came the reply; 'id's thy feyther.'

"The old school is one of the features of Blacksnape life, which is not amongst its least interesting. It was built in 1824 by public subscription, and the villagers who had no money to give rendered their share in its erection by assisting to build it at night and at weekends when they were not at work in the pits or the loom-sheds."

Mr Fish and I are much indebted to Mr William Kershaw, of Bolton-road, Darwen, for the valuable assistance he has rendered us in recalling to memory incidents of Old Blacksnape.

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Chapels as told by old John Walsh.

"Chapels was a bigger place than Darwen once on a time."

My companion was a man well past the allotted span of years, a grandson of "Shakespeare" Eccles, whose fame obtained in old Chapels more than a hundred years ago, because he knew how to read and write. His cottage was an "academy," and there he taught others to do the same. A man who loved learning, old "Shakespeare," as he was nicknamed by the people of his days, collected books, and his library, still not broken up, may be found, when it is carefully searched, to contain some rare treasures. Old "Shakespeare's" son lived long. The last of the real old handloom weavers, he was travelling on towards his ninetieth year when I first met him and received his confidences and more, for he showed me how cloth was woven by weavers before the power-loom came to crush their industry, and rouse their ire. It was the son of old Richard Eccles who was my companion in my walk through old Chapels. Not only has he succeeded to the old hand-loom "Shakespeare" Eccles made ninety years ago and more, but to the quaint title "Old Eccles," and to the wealth of stories and recollections gathered by members of his family over a good share of two hundred years.

We went through Chapels, destroyed the new and restored the old. From Burgoyne Nook we saw again the narrow roadway past Ratten Row – now Dover-street – and Catlow Fold, wherein is Yates's Chapel, we recalled John Duxbury, "Joan o' Simons," who was a horse-racer and cock-fighter; old weavers who had loomshops in which apprentices were taken and taught the art, touched Clark's Fields, and behind the Punch Bowl Inn brought into existence again the old pump and the old smith. The way through old Chapels was rough a hundred years ago, and much higher than it is to-day, and narrow too. The space is blank now where once old Betty Barnett, who always wore a white cap, had her cottage. The "Black Dog" Inn, cartooned by the late Sir Frank Lockwood when its license was extinguished, is now put to another purpose,

and the license of the Black Bull, which was opposite, and had rounded steps leading up to its front door, has been transferred to Market-street, in Darwen. Here and there along old Chapels were cellar dwellings, and at one house it could be seen how a door had been walled up, which at one time allowed a way out into an old-time garden, now non-existent. The site of one short block of houses interesting. It was here lived Ellis Walmsley, whose son, the late William Walmsley, J.P., became leader of the Darwen Conservative party; "Old Tomlinson," father of Alderman James Tomlinson, J.P. an ex-Mayor of Darwen; and where there was the grocer's shop of James Harwood, whose son, Mr Joseph Harwood, J.P. is at the head of one of Darwen's greatest manufacturing firms to-day. Modern improvement has extended Chapels beyond its limitations of the old days., for on a line with the beginning of the present schoolhouse there was a block of houses across the street. We passed through Bury Court into Bury-square, and had a real old-time picture, charming in its quaintness. The steps, well worn, leading to the houses, the thin hand-rail fixed up one side the steps to each dwelling – we were, indeed, back in old Chapels, the surroundings, touched with the blight of December, completing the picture.

The eyes of my veteran guide kindled with enthusiasm as we explored old Chapels, and its atmosphere lived his recollections o'er. Playing about its streets and gardens as a child, weaving as a lad, and living all the time in the shadow of historic Chapels, he had known the men and women of the first half of the nineteenth century, and listened to their stories.

Much of Darwen's greatness has sprung from old Chapels. members of the old families have gone out from the vicinity of Higher and Lower Chapel, and carved out reputations, and built up great industries. They have done much for Darwen. Church life in the town had its beginning in old Chapels, and there a sturdy Nonconformist spirit its birth. The first mention of a chapel is connected with the closing years of the sixteenth century, and the oldest parts of St. James's Church, or Higher Chapel, go back to about 1720, and stand almost on the exact site of the original church. Another Ecclesiastical building is Yates's Chapel, now four dwelling houses, in Catlow Fold. It has old architectural features, and the balls of stone on the roof are similar to those of Lower Chapel.

The story of Higher and Lower Chapel is a long one, and crowded with interest. The Nonconformists got their license of religious liberty from the second James in 1687, and they sought to get possession of Higher Chapel from the Vicar of Blackburn, who had the keys. Berry's Meeting House was then in existence, and it was this, the vicar argued, that the King had licensed, and not the old chapel. He refused their request, but the Nonconformists were not to be denied. The doors were broken down, Congregational worship established, and the curate sent down by the vicar not permitted to perform his ministerial offices. A petition followed, and the King restored Higher Chapel to the vicar. The Nonconformists could not resist the King's warrant, but they appealed to his Majesty, declaring that the old chapel had been built by the inhabitants of old Chapels themselves, and not by Ecclesiastical authority, and that it had never been consecrated by a Bishop. Their claim failed.

The stories told of the Lower Chapel Nonconformists of early days – how they worshipped in the unfrequented parts of the hills, and the moorland – may readily be accepted. They loved their faith, and loved their church. They were not all Chapels folk who came to Sunday service at Lower Chapel, and to Sunday school. Families came along rough roads of the days of a century ago, let the weather be ever so bad, from Pickup Bank, and even from Belmont and Sough, carrying with them their food for the day which they would eat in the chapel or the school. Members of the congregation lived in all parts of Darwen that grew up, but attendance at Lower Chapel on the Sunday was a solemn call.

One old Sough adherent had a family of sons, and when he particularly wanted to march them off to chapel, he would buy a gallon of mussels. These were boiled for the Sunday morning breakfast. Those who were not going to chapel got none of the mussels, of which they were all very fond. By this bait the old man got his sons to the chapel, and some of them are regular attenders there to this day.

Another family of faithful Lower Chapelers living a distance away would prepare for their Sunday ??? in the school by baking cakes, and when they were poled together, sufficientthey made a substantial the parcel a "concertina," and there were often humorous discussions as to whose turn it was to carry the "instrument."

These incidents, and many similar, really relate to a little later period. They do not belong to old Chapels, nor the beginning of the present Lower Chapels.

Amongst the men who lived in old Chapels a hundred years ago were Michael Beswick, who was a coal agent, as well as the landlord of the Black Bull; David Nevill, who kept the Black Dog; J. Pickup, who was a grocer and flour dealer, as well as a cotton manufacturer – amongst others. The older families were beginning to make their homes in Darwen which was beginning to show signs of growth. Old Jeremy Hunt attended Lower Chapel, as did his grandfather, old Thann'el. The Holdens – old Timothy o'th' Loom's family – the Marsdens, the Smalleys (from the Rev. Robert Smalley, who was minister for forty years, from 1751), the Harwoods, the Pickups, the Shorrocks, the Eccles, the Leaches, the Duxburys, the Watsons, the Fishes, the Lightbowns, the Catlows and the Walkdens, amongst other important Darwen families, have all close associations with old Chapels. Many of them have grown in the course of generations from humble positions.

Few remain to-day in Chapels of the contemporaries of John Duxbury, who lived at the knowle in the early part of the last century. John was of the Chapels' famous men, nor because of any part he took in the religious life at Higher or Lower Chapel, but because he was a great supporter of the horse races held on the course where Mr Robert Shorrocks's woodyard is now. It extends down to a part of the land on which the Duckworth-street Congregational School is built. He started the horses, and old Richard Eccles, the handloom weaver, told me shortly before his death about the races. They were great events for the people all about, and on the course were stalls at which toys and sweets were sold, shows and tents in which various exhibitions were given. Old Eccles, who was born in 1812, as a lad often sat on the wall in Robin Bank and watched the horses running.

About old Chapels were many loom shops in which handloom weaving was done. John Duxbury, who was known as the "Duke of Darwen" was one who put out cloth to the weavers. The pieces woven were about 30 yards in length and 34 inches wide, and were principally shirtings. The weavers were paid 5s a piece at one time, but prices came down much below this. Then they started scale weaving, and in the words of old Eccles, "it dropped to almost nothing." There was not a mill in Darwen in the days to which I refer, and outside the work John

Duxbury gave out to the handloom weavers work had to be obtained from the merchants who came into the district by stage coach. Some was got from Blackburn, from against in King-street, to whom the cloth had to be carried when it was woven.

Chapels was a rough place. When folks were going to the chapel or church I have seen drinking going on in the streets. The public-houses were open, and folks could be seen sitting about the streets with their jugs of beer drinking from glasses and cups.

"Folk used to come from all parts to Lower Chapel. The Fishes came from Blacksnape, the Harwoods from Hoddlesden, the Ainsworths from somewhere on the moorside, and others were Jeremy Hunt's lot, Nicholas Holden, who was a steward for the lord of the manor, Greenwood, and others. Nearly everybody who was a chapel-goer would come to Lower Chapel, and many would bring parcels of food with them.

From 1838 John Walsh has lived in Old Chapels, and for 48 years in "Rattan Row". He knew the old folk who formed the Old Chapels Colony.

"Joshua Pickup lived where the Swan is, and he had a 'badging shop,' and sold groceries and such like.

Henry Thompson was at the old Punch Bowl, and

John Beswick had the Black Dog, and was at the same time sexton at St. James's Church.

James Shorrock had a grocer's shop near Lower Chapel, and his father, old John Shorrock, was sexton at Lower Chapel.

There was an old man nicknamed Dawber. His real name was Tommy Lightbown, and he had been a soldier.

Will o' Bens was my father and an old collier.

Dick o' Hoppers lived near St. James's Church. He had four foster-brothers – Joe o'Hopper's, Jack o' Hopper's, and George o' Hopper's. They were

nicknamed Hoppers because their father, old Tommy, went about on a crutch.

At Knowle there were the Duxburys – Joan o'Simon's lot – and Edmund, John's son, was called Ned o' t' Knowle. Old John was the old horse racer and

cock-fighter – he started the races on the course down Robin Bank, and he gave out work to the handloom weavers.

William Walsh who also lived at Knowle, was called Billy Cute, because he was so nimble and sharp. He was a handloom weaver, and one of the Chapels

football players, and was in the side against Tottington – a sharp one on the field he was.

Another player was Drummer – his proper name was George Taylor. The players wore boots and white stockings. Boots were something in those days, for

it was mostly clogs that were worn.

Ralph Edge, who lived in Chapels too, worked at the printshop at Dob Meadows, and his brother George was a barber and shaver.

Then there was the Shorrock family. Ralph and William in their young days were calico printers at Dob Meadows, and they went to work for Eccles

Shorrock at Union-street factory. Michael Shorrock was a clogger, and James a grocer.

Two brothers – Thomas and Richard Catlow – worked at Dob Meadows too as lads. They lived in Catlow Fold, and the houses there were owned by their

father. John Catlow was their half brother, and he became a manufacturer in Darwen and a magistrate. He was the head of the firm of Messrs John

Catlow and Sons, and they have some thousands of looms running now.

A man who lived in Chapels Brow was William Fish. He had been a soldier, and he was nicknamed Bill o' Dolly's. He gave our weft to handloom weavers.

Dolly was his mother's name.

Everyone in Chapels had a nickname in the old days, and often there told a family history.

James Bury was a handloom weaver. He lived at Chapels Brow, and worked for Eccles Shorrock.

Old John Beckett lived in the same locality, and owned some property.

Jimmy Holden was a handloom weaver and a bit of a joiner. He was noted for fiddle-playing, and he was a singer also.

Joe Hollis was another who had been a soldier. He went about with milk cakes and toffee.

Jimmy Watson was an old collier, and lived about the top of Chapels Brow.

Then there was Galloping Tom. His name was Thomas Holden, and he got his nickname because he was a foot runner.

William Riley, son of Richard Riley, was called Bill o' Dick's o' Riley's. He was a singer at Lower Chapel, and also a singing master at Belgrave Chapel.

A Policeman lived in the bottom house in Chapels Brow, but I do not recall his name.

At Burgoyne Nook old Thomas Eccles lived, a handloom weaver,

and opposite Eccles's house was John Aspin, also a handloom weaver

George o'Brigg's lived in a farnhouse near St. James's Church.

In a cottage next to the farm lived a lady named Sarah Shorrock, who was aunt to James Shorrock, father of the late Alderman Christopher Shorrock.

Abraham Beswick lived in a house attached to the farm. He had two children, and was uncle to James Beswick, who was a gaffer for Brandwoods' at their

colliery and for Potters'.

Beside Lower Chapel there was a man called Butler. That was his nickname, and what it means I don't know. His name was James Ramsbottom and he

was one who worked at Dob Meadows.

John Eccles lived next door to him. He was a handloom weaver and the father of old Richard Eccles, whose family have lived so long in Chapels, he was

an eccentric character. Besides being a handloom weaver he had a little shop, where he sold toffee and would weigh lads and lasses and also tell them

their height for a penny as they went to Sunday school.

Old Ellen Taylor lived opposite Lower Chapel. Her husband was called Jimmy Skipper, and was an old crofter and worked in the bleaching works. Her

daughter Mary married Andrew Bury, who was singing master at Lower Chapel, opposite which Joe Eccles also lived. Betty Shorrock was known to us as Bet o' Barnets's, and one of her nephews was Mayor of Darwen. They were not really an Old Chapels family, but came

from Sough way to Chapels, where they lived a long time. Ann Cockshoot, who lived in Catlow Fold, had a loomshop, and also sold toffee.

Opposite the Swan Hugh Lightbown lived. He went by the name of Hugh o' Old Ailse's and was a brother of Dawber.

John Duxbury, who came from Tythebarn way, was a very nice old man, and was a handloom weaver.

My father was Will o' Bens, and they called his wife Jenny Cockshoot. Her father was an old calico printer. He was called Old Tom Cockshoot, though

his name was Tom Walsh. The Walshes are one of the oldest Chapels families. He had sixteen children, fifteen of them daughters. Only one is now

living. I can count six generations of this family.

Jimmy Cauntle lived in the top house in Catlow Fold. He was a funny looking chap.

Tom Holden, who lived opposite Lower Chapel, was an old crofter, and was father to Jack o' Bet's, who kept the Black Dog.

Ralph Knowles, who worked at Dob Meadows, was called Ralph o' Alec's, and he had a brother named Ralph Jonathan, and a sister, Peggy.

My wife's father, John Eccles, lived near St. James's,

and Thomas Baron next to the Swan. He was brother to Joshua Baron and William Baron. Thomas married Sally, a daughter of Thomas Walsh who went

by the name of Tommy Almond, and built the old Market House in Market-street, Darwen, now the Liberal Club.

At 'Goyne Nook Henry Lightbown lived, and he was one of a Dob Meadows family. Burggoyne Nook was built in 1812. Old John Lightbown lived in

Chapels a long time, though he was born at Tythebarn. He was a grand and good man, and was always connected with Lower Chapel.

The Leaches are a branch of the Catlow family (*Eli Leach 1822 married Sarah Catlow 1826*)

Old Henry Lightbown was a spinner at Lower darwen before he came to Chapels. He started selling groceries

Old Joe Walmsley (Old Joe "Lawrence") was a singing master at St. James's, and he also worked at Dob Meadows, William Walmsley's father was

called Elias, and, alongside the father of Alderman James Tomlinson, lived near the chapel.

The Harwoods are an old Chapels family. James Harwood had a grocer's shop, and married Betty, a daughter of Joe Lawrence. Mr Joseph Harwood,

cotton manufacturer, and a magistrate, is his son.

In the bottom house in Ratten Row Joe Riley lived, and an old Chapels soldier was also called Joe Riley, and was a relation to Richard Riley, who

lived in Catlow Fold."

And in this way old John Walsh, of wonderful memory, told his story of Old Chapel's.

Burgoyne Nook has been mentioned, and it may be stated that it was so named because a man named Burgoyne, who was a great fighter. The story is told of him that he was one day going to Turton Fair for the purposes of fighting, and when he was well on his way he heard a voice telling him that he was doing wrong. He turned round, but could see no one about so he continued on his way. A little further along, however he heard the voice again delivering the same message, but again he could see no one. Upon that he dropped upon his knees and began praying. He was converted and became a local preacher.

Sough and other places. 6th Jun 1814 Blackburn Weekly Telegraph

About 1787 a cottage house was built about there, and it was occupied by one John Pilkington, and he was employed at Round Barn Colliery.

The records of the old Waddicor family show that Drummer Stoops was known before John Pilkington's time.

There was a Thomas Waddicor living there 160 years ago. He was a farmer and died from sunstroke in the hayfield one June day.

He married a Miss Whewell, and had a family.

His eldest son was named Thomas, and was known as Thomas the Second. He also married and had a family, and his eldest son became Thomas the Third, and was a man who had learning.

He was the eldest of a family of 22 children, twelve of whom averaged 17 stone in weight.

Thomas the Third was a good Christian man. He gave lessons in his home to any of his neighbours who would come and learn, and for twelve months he preached at Lower Chapel when the congregation there was without a paid minister.

He was brought up at Haydock's a farm near Drummer Stoops. Some of the members of his family were farmers, and others quarrymen, but Thomas in his later years was a loomer.

Below Drummer Stoops, at Grimehills Brow, John Entwistle lived, and he was known as "John o' Bob's." John suffered the severe disappointment in his life that he was so big nobody would fight him. He had a son who was known as "Bob o' John o' Bob's."

The late John Entwistle, better known as John o' Oliver's, was brought up at a place called Tom Barn, on Cranberry Moss, and his father's name was Oliver Entwistle. There were four sons – John, Joseph, Thomas, and James.

The Entwistles used to sink little pits on Cranberry Moss, They were what was called Darwen yard mines few yards deep, coals were by windlass, and sent to Turton.of these little pits there was fighting amongst the men. Some of them were too lazy to go down for coal, but when it was brought up they would fight for its ownership.

The Entwistle family later got Green Leech Pit, and James was killed there. When he was brought to the top a man who had brought breakfast for him said: " Jim, tha's worked hard, but tha'll work no moare." Then he sat down and ate the breakfast so it would not be wasted.

The mines and minerals at Entwisle and Cranberry Moss were at one time in the hands of a number of people, and they came to be owned by a Mr. Tyldesley, who was lord of the manor. Robert Slack was the owner of a mine about 1791, and James Kay was another owner if a mine.

Returning to Drummer Stoops, I find that Thomas Waddicor, "Thomas the Second," was a very heavy man. His brother John and all the members of the family were also very heavy.

There was a John Waddicor,

Jane Waddicor (who married Peter Walkden),

Alice (who married John Lord),

Mary (who married a man named Shuttleworth and went to live at Marl Pit Green in Watery-Lane),

Elizabeth (who married John Walkden of Sough),

Andrew and Richard.

.....
Mr Jeremy Leach of Cranberry Lane

"Coming down from Drummer Stoops, in the direction of Gorton Well", Mr Jeremy Leach tells me, "there is Moss Side, a cottage which has a small piece of land attached. A man named Law lived there who married one of the Waddicor family. He was a handloom weaver, and worked in his own cottage. The cloth he wove he took to Blackburn to dispose of, and there get more work. Sometimes he would take it to Robert Leach at Sough, who put out work for handloom weavers. There are members of Robert Leach's family living in Darwen today. "At Gorton Well, William Aspden, who was called Old William o' Aspden, lived. He was a little man, and a handloom weaver, and also has a little grocer's shop. Times were hard for the people in those old times. The windows of his cottage were very small – they were all little in those times – and he had very few chances of making a show of any-

The hand of the improver has wrought many changes in old Sough village. Mr William Fish, of Barons Fold, on the old Roman road, has recollection of it as it was nearly 80 years ago, and he tells me that when he was a boy "Sough was a bonny place. There were trees and hedges and meadows there, and an open stream in which trout were to be caught." Mrs Atherton, of Watery-lane, has a similar story to tell. She is a granddaughter of old John Briggs, of Cranberry Fold, and is now turned 80 years of age. "There were trees all about when I was a girl." she told me, " and fields all the way to Bolton-road. Not so many houses were there in Sough village in those old days; just the houses in Causeway-street, where the Cockers and the Wardleys lived, and those in Tack-row, where the handloom weavers and colliers were. The weavers wove checks mostly, and though there was a receiving warehouse at Sough for cloth and others at Darwen, they took the checks to Egerton. The cloth had to be carried, and the paths were none too safe, for they were infested with footpads ever on the lookout for victims. There were neither schools nor teachers in Sough in those days. The nearest school was at Astley-strret, and was maintained by Eccles Shorrocks, who paid a wage to the one-armed schoolmaster, Squire Brooks. I went to it after I had started work at Wardley's printing and bleachworks, and we were allowed one week's schooling a month. The firm paid the fees, and we were taught reading, writing and arithmetic.

On Sundays we went either to Darwen or to Whittlestonehead. They were hard days, and the food was coarser than now – mostly porridge with milk or treacle. My grandfather, John Briggs, taught us reading and writing at night, and James Marsden taught his own family.

It was in Causeway-street the Cockers lived, and they were members of a very old and notable Tockholes family. James Cocker, the first member of whom I information, was a yeoman, and an owner of houses. In 1779 he bought houses in Old Water-street from Ann Foulds. They had been bought fourteen years previously

6 Jun 1914 Blackburn Weekly Telegraph

Cranberry Bottoms, Cranberry Fold and Sough

William was a man who lived a fairly respectable life, and old Richard Holden, of Grimehills, married one of his daughters, named Ann. Susannah was another daughter, and she married a man names Eccles, who lived in Cranberry Bottoms. James Briggs, from Jack o' Mon's, married another daughter.

William had a son named George, who went to live at Edgworth, and married into the Briggs family.

There was another son named Thomas, who married, and there may have been other children I don't remember.

"Cranberry Bottoms is a typical bit of old Lancashire, and in the old days handloom weavers and colliers lived there.

James Fish, Jem o't Bottoms, was a handloom weaver, who had his house there. His sons were James, Richard, Thomas, John and Michael, and his daughters Mary Alice (who married Thomas Aspden), Ann, Lettice, Margaret and Betty. The family married, and their descendants are now living in Darwen.

"In the middle house in Bottoms old Ned o't Bottoms lived. His proper name was Edward Holden, and he was a trader. He went round the countryside collecting eggs and butter, which he took to Bolton Market for sale. He had a son called Richard, and a daughter who married into the Waddicor family.

"Edmund Holden lived in the third house. His wife was a North-country woman, and spoke in a dialect that was peculiar to the folk of the district. They had a family. There were three sons, Robert, Edmund and Andrew, and two daughters, Mary and Ailse. One of the sons was killed at a colliery. Mary married a Haslem, and Ailse taking for her husband a man called Holden had not to trouble about getting accustomed to a new name when she married.

"Behind the three houses in Cranberry Bottoms there was a very little cottage, in which lived William Fis, who was a very peculiar character. He was called Bill o' Badger's, and was a cockfighter. He did odd jobs – when he was in the humour and if they were likely to pay him well. But when there was only the bare remuneration the job was one William did not care about. He married a sister of James Fish, who lived in the first house in the Bottoms. They had three sons, William, Ralph, and another, and a daughter named Mary. Old Bill was found dead on the moors in the direction of Haslingden Grane.

"On the way there was another very old cottage, and Robert Eccles lived in it. He had to do with a pit. One of his sons named Richard married a daughter of William Aspden, of Gorton Well. There was another son, John, and two daughters whose names I don't know, though I believe one was Mary.

"Cranberry Fold must be a hundred years ago have almost appeared like a little village to those who approached it over the sparsely populated countryside. Houses then were very few, and widely separated. In the first house in the Fold John Briggs lived. He was known as Jack o' John's o' Henry's, and there were six daughters. These were Ann, Berry, Ailse, Fanny Esther and Mary. Longworth; Mary married man named Marsden, and Betty became the wife of a man named Beckett. The other three sisters married three brothers of the Fish family.

"A son of Jack o' John's o' Henry's lived in the second house. He married a sister of Richard Holden of Grimehills. Their sons were John, Henry, Edmund,